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AUTHOR: James J. Lagrone

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Catalog of opportunities and hazards in standardized institutional routine.

THE HOTEL IN OPERATIONS

James J. Lagrone

Hotels have been used for years by case officers for meetings and other purposes, but the recent world-wide proliferation of larger and more modern hotels, often used by the local governments for official meetings and state visitors, has increased operational interest in them. If a case officer knows the basic systems and operating procedures of a hotel he is working in or against, he is more likely to be able to do the job without attracting attention. Although a hotel staff is rarely looking for intelligence activities as such, it is constantly on the lookout for bad credit risks, thieves, sexual deviates, organized prostitution, and any activities that may disturb the guests or damage the hotel physically. In watching for such things, an alert employee can easily trip up a case officer who through carelessness or ignorance attracts undue attention.

The following describes the systems used by large hotels to check and control their guests and then examines the staff positions from the viewpoint of the desirability of different employees as agents for operational tasks. Any hotel of more than 100 rooms will necessarily have procedures which more or less parallel those discussed here. A given hotel may be more strictly or more laxly run, but it would be wise always to assume full application of the control procedures. In a smaller hotel, with fewer guests and a tighter staff, it can be assumed that little passes unnoticed. (An exception is the U.S.-style motel, whose layout complicates control and observation.) It is safe to say, then, that any hazard pointed out in the following paragraphs will be even more difficult for a case officer in a smaller establishment.

Routine on Arrival

On arrival the guest fills in a registration form giving his name, address, passport number, etc. (In some countries he must still turn over the passport for a short time for registration with the local police.) This information the front office staff transfers to an ac-

counting card, called a folio, used to record charges made to the guest during his stay. The ribbon copy of the folio goes to the cashier or credit department, but a carbon is retained by the front desk in a card-index file usually called a room rack.

If any problem concerning a room comes to the Assistant Manager's attention, the room rack is immediately checked to see who is in the room and what he represents. The information on the folio can thus be of critical importance in reassuring the management so that it lets the matter drop there or causing it to investigate further. For no single slight irregularity is likely to create a hazard for the case officer, but mysterious noises or comings and goings from his room might, in combination with poor credit implications on his card, lead to a thorough investigation. Some of the credit indications and other features of the folio's content are the following:

Name and address. Many hotels keep in their credit offices phone directories of every large city in Europe, Canada, and the United States. If a guest's name does not show up in the appropriate phone book it is not seriously damaging, but it does not help his credit rating. A fictitious company name or business address would naturally be worse.

Reservations. The folio records whether a reservation had been made before arrival. If the case officer can plan ahead the time he is to spend in a hotel, it is well worth his effort to make a reservation some time in advance, preferably through a travel agency as backing for his credit status. Next best is to make the reservation personally by mail or telephone a week or so ahead. But even one made a day or two before arrival gives status better than a walk-in's.

Room choice and price. It is an axiom in the hotel business that occupants of the higher-priced rooms (particularly the corner suites, which are often used for entertainment) can get away with more noise and strange activity than ordinary guests. One should be careful, however, not to take an expensive room without proper attention to the establishment of a good credit impression, for high charges against an undetermined credit rating will arouse the concern of any credit manager.

Credit cards. The room clerk will often tactfully ask for these on registration. If not, the case officer would do well to show them casually, if the situation allows, as a good way of establishing his credit and avoiding the prying eyes of the credit manager. He does not have to charge on a credit card, just let the front desk record

the data. He could even flash a false credit card on arrival and then settle his bill by cash when leaving.

Luggage. The old jokes about one-night stands with a hat-box for the girl and a toothbrush for the man are really quite true; the notation "light luggage" is a warning signal in all hotels. Usually the room clerk or the bellman reports this condition to the Assistant Manager on duty or the Night Manager, and an entry is made on the room rack folio. The case officer could devise a story of a missed plane or some other explanation; but a suitcase, even filled with nothing but dirty clothes, would avoid the whole issue.

Special arrangements. In large hotels it is more common than may be recognized that "special arrangements" are made for a guest. These may concern diet, laundry service, or a wide range of conveniences. One of operational interest provides for holding incoming telephone calls and informing the guest who is calling. Another is a "no information" arrangement: it is noted on the room rack and at the telephone switchboard that if anyone inquires for the guest he is to be told there is no record of him. A request for this service would not strike the hotel staff as anything out of the ordinary.

Mr. and Mrs. If a woman is involved in the operation and must come to the hotel, it is best either to have her take a separate room or to register her as the case officer's wife. No matter how improbable the couple, the Mr.-and-Mrs. registration is better than none. Hotel managers, acutely aware that lawsuits and other troubles can result from harassment of couples who may turn out to be really married, normally accept such a registration without prying. But an unregistered woman's comings and goings will be noted by the hotel staff, particularly after early evening (or later if there is an upstairs or roof-top night club or restaurant patronized by outsiders).

Day use. Room occupancy, at a reduced rate, for one day and up to 6 p.m. only is generally encouraged by hotels for the extra revenue it brings in. It is practiced almost exclusively by businessmen for meetings and other such purposes. As for any registration, a normal reservation, naturally with a business address, is desirable. Out-of-town women sometimes take day-use rooms when shopping in the city; but the unaccompanied female in a hotel is always scrutinized more closely than a man. In most hotels tape recorders and typewriters can be rented in conjunction with day-use rooms. It is a good idea to take advantage of this service, whether to use the

machines in debriefings, say, or just to increase the business atmosphere of the occupancy.

Procedures During Occupancy

In a large hotel, especially if it is full to capacity, one can get away with almost anything for about 24 hours, short of continuous loud noises. A hotel staff is usually stretched very thin when all rooms are occupied, when ceremonial affairs bring in many dignitaries, or when they are serving large banquets. Moreover, the management will generally not take any action against a guest until it has monitored his behavior for a reasonable time.

In going about his business in his room, the case officer should keep in mind two chief hazards. First, the only way to prevent physical entry by members of the hotel staff is the chain latch, the ordinary lock being no bar to them. Maids, bellmen, and assistant managers, particularly in Europe, make a common practice of entering without knocking. Second, whatever the soundproofing of walls, ceiling, and floor, the room door is a weak point in the insulation and the place where a staff member's ear will promptly be cocked if suspicion or interest is aroused.

Moreover, the staff has legitimate need to enter from time to time, the maids daily. There is no surer way to draw attention to a room than to hang a "Do Not Disturb" notice permanently on the doorknob. After about eight hours it will be brought to the attention of the Head Housekeeper, who may ask the Assistant Manager to make sure no accident has befallen the guest. Complete isolation can be arranged for a period by calling the front desk and giving some pretext for requesting freedom from all disturbances including phone calls. Such a request, recorded at the front desk and passed on to the Housekeeping Department, will give perhaps 24 hours without interruptions from the hotel staff.

When the maid enters a room she wants to make it up quickly and get out; she usually has more work than she can handle. As long as nothing arouses her special interest, therefore, she will do her job and leave. (Beware the maid who stops and talks. She disobeys a strict rule in saying more than "Good day" to a guest—and probably has a purpose in it, to solicit "business," perhaps, or get information.) She is responsible, while straightening up the room, for checking evidence (beds, toothbrushes, etc.) that two or more people are using one registered as a single. If she sees anything

suspicious she will tell her Floor Housekeeper, who will report it to the front office. The front office will then usually telephone the occupant or stop him the next time he is at the desk and ask whether anyone is staying with him. The penalty would usually be only an extra charge for double occupancy, but the staff's attention has thus been attracted. It would be better either to register the double or to be careful to remove any evidence before the maid enters.

Because of the theft problem, maids are constantly under close supervision by the management and security staffs. Unless a maid is a thief she will therefore rarely try to open any luggage or even drawers, and a room is fairly secure if all telltale equipment and papers are locked up in luggage while she is there. If someone must be in the room continuously, he should give the maid some excuse such as a headache. The grapevine in a hotel is extremely fast and effective, and anything unusual will be passed on by word of mouth until it arouses the management's suspicion. Although a guest who remains constantly in his room violates no hotel rule, he thus invites investigation.

Room service, laundry boys, and other service personnel will enter a room only if called. But they are notoriously observant, and the room should be cleared of anything unusual before they are called.

In the matter of services it is also hazardous to charge too much on a hotel bill. If a credit card has been presented on registering, it may be all right to charge a reasonable amount to the room; but if credit standing has not been firmly established, any sizable charges—say more than $25 in one day—would come to the attention of the Credit Manager. It is his job to review daily any bills that seem to be getting unduly large. Even with credit established, excesses in the use of room service and charging to the room are bound to attract attention.

If a case officer or his agent is to stay a long time in the hotel so that his bill will be large, it is imperative that he establish a good credit impression at the outset. (This may be a particular problem when an agent's hotel bill is to be paid not by him but by mail. A business letter making the arrangement in advance is the ideal solution, but short of that a personal visit to the Credit Manager before a large bill piles up is advisable.) During a long stay, an interim bill may appear in one's room or front desk letterbox. This is ordinarily intended as a reminder of the size of the account, not as a hard demand for payment. But it is an excellent idea, if you get such a

notice, to inform the front desk how much longer you will be staying and ask if they would like you to pay the bill up to date. This will make a good impression on the Credit Manager, who gets some of his ulcers from guests that are never seen while their bills run up into the hundreds of dollars.

No telephone in a hotel can be trusted. During the day, when the operators are busy, calls are only occasionally monitored; but at night, when phone traffic is light, it is common for the operators to monitor *all* conversations, even internal ones between rooms. Long-distance calls they usually monitor at all hours of the day, particularly when the charges are reversed. These practices, the result of police requirements and hotel efforts to control organized prostitution, together with operators' curiosity and boredom, are world-wide. The rule about increased snooping at night applies, incidentally, to other employees than the operators: the staff tends to be busy during the day with its regular work, but its inquisitiveness and capacity for observation go up sharply after six p.m. and practically double after ten.

Should a guest fall under suspicion for any reason, the usual procedure is as follows: The Assistant Manager is alerted during the day, or the Night Manager at night. Before taking any action, he usually tries to verify whatever was reported by sending hotel security officers to check the room involved. If the room is occupied they will listen outside and mount a surveillance in the hall (usually standing near the elevators as if waiting for a car). If they think that something may be wrong, the Assistant Manager will then come to inquire or investigate what is going on inside.

The case officer's best defense against such an investigation is of course to avoid creating any suspicion in the first place. But if the Assistant Manager or Night Manager presents himself at the door, reasonable answers to any questions will usually end the inquiry. The importance of the often-forgotten cover story is clearly evident here. If nothing else works, a last resort is to show pure outrage. A demand for the Manager will at least win some time, for even at this stage the hotel staff will be nervous about pushing too hard. A mistake would be very hard for them to explain, and people staying in large hotels often have money and connections. Thus a bold front can stop the Assistant or Night Manager at the door and force him to get the Manager or the police, or both, in order to gain entry.

If a room is unoccupied when the investigation is first mounted, it may be entered and searched. Then if suspicions appear to be confirmed it might be double-locked with a special key that turns the night latch from the outside and prevents the guest from reentering on his own. So if a case officer returns to his room and finds that his key will no longer open the door, it may mean that it has been purposely double-locked. He then has the choice of going down to the front desk, where a problem could be waiting, or skipping out and abandoning whatever effects he has in the room.

Keys and Security

Hotel keys are usually controlled by the Manager's office or the Security Department. There are the following types:

Grand Master. This key will open all the rooms in the hotel. It is controlled as strictly as possible; only the Manager and Department Heads have copies of their own. The Night and Assistant Managers share one, passing it from one to another as they come on duty.

Floor Master. This is the key the maids carry; it opens all guest rooms on one floor. Each maid takes a key from the Housekeeping Department office when she starts work, carries it fastened around her waist, and turns it in at the end of her shift.

Section Master. Usually intended for maintenance workers, this key opens all maintenance doors in one area. Copies are controlled by the Engineering Department.

Room Keys. These are controlled by the front desk; there are usually at least four for each room.

Individual hotel locks can usually be changed a maximum of four times before the grand master has to be changed, a prohibitively expensive job. In practice the individual locks are infrequently changed even when copies of the keys are lost. It is an excellent idea to build up a collection of keys from a hotel which is of special operational interest. By billeting staff personnel, transients, and agent contacts in it you can collect a good assortment over a period of time. Each key means at least entry to one room, and enough keys from one floor may give an expert locksmith the clues he needs to reproduce the floor master. If enough floors are represented in the collection, even the grand master can be fabricated.

Although the regulations of most large hotels clearly provide for strict control of keys, the strictness varies widely in different hotels

according to enforcement measures taken by the Manager and the Chief Security Officer. Since keys become status symbols among the hotel staff they tend to show up in the possession of some personnel not entitled to them, but just what irregularities one might find in an individual hotel cannot be predicted.

The hotel security forces almost always have close links with the local police; the Chief Security Officer and most of his staff are usually ex-policemen. The two groups exchange information regularly, and the local authorities seldom take any action in the hotel without the knowledge and cooperation of the Chief Security Officer. The Security Department has a twofold mission, to protect the hotel and to protect the guests; and its staff is divided into two corresponding sections. Those guarding the hotel usually have uniforms, while those concerned with guest relations more often wear plain clothes or inconspicuous jackets supplied by the hotel. The plain-clothes types, nevertheless, are as a rule easily recognizable, for they stay in the lobby near the Assistant Manager's desk when not sent off on some special duty, and they stand out prominently when the lobby is not crowded. The uniformed guards, on the other hand, move about the hotel according to a regular pattern; they are more concerned with checking entrances and fire exits and other physical security matters than with monitoring guests' activities.

In general, the more intelligent officers of the security staff are assigned to the section concerned with guest relations. It is worth remembering that the status of all the security officers except the Chief is rather low. Although they may pretend to some authority in dealing with guests, there is actually very little that they are empowered to do. They are only aides to the management and rarely allowed to act independently. Although they are often not armed, it is best to assume they are.

The position of "house detective" is more or less peculiar to the United States. It is often filled by a licensed private investigator. He may be granted a considerable independence of action compared with ordinary security officers, and he is generally armed.

Agent Potential

It would of course be highly desirable to have a recruitment on the staff of any hotel regarded as a target in audio or other operations. (This fact is so evident that we must assume other intelligence services in the area will also be trying to acquire assets on the staff.)

The following paragraphs describe in some detail the attributes of the various positions, their work functions, their status in the administrative setup, and their potential for intelligence purposes. It will be noted that none of the positions from the "back of the house" are included, such as those in the kitchen, restaurants, or steward department. These, which usually have little or no access to upper floors of the hotel, are not worth examining.

Before we proceed to look at the individual positions, we should note a few characteristics of hotel staffs in general. The pay for hotel employees is fairly low at practically all levels. By giving free meals and supplying uniforms hotels are often able to offer lower salaries than they would otherwise have to. This situation increases the importance of the practice of tipping. Throughout the entire spectrum of hotel transactions, various kinds of tips, kickbacks, and commissions are customary. Some are more overt than others, but personnel from the Manager down to the restaurant bus boy are accustomed to getting a monetary reward for any extra service. This being the case, the typical hotel employee exhibits two interesting characteristics: he is usually short of money, and he expects to make extra income by performing various services for superiors or guests. He therefore might tend to be more susceptible to approaches by intelligence officers and perhaps easier to recruit and control than many other employee types of comparable operational interest.

Front Desk and Office

Room Clerk. This is the man behind the front desk who registers new guests. He must be presentable and fairly fluent in languages spoken by the hotel's usual clientele. Often he is a young man, just starting out in the business, and receives very little pay. His status in the hotel is rather low—a little higher than a secretary—and he has no authorized access to keys or rooms. He can be useful, however, in that he knows who is in the hotel, when VIP's will arrive, and which rooms they probably will occupy. He also has enough latitude in room assignments to place an ordinary guest in a room of his choice. He is usually well plugged into the hotel grapevine and knows many details about the activities of guests and staff alike.

Senior Night Clerk. Usually the most competent room clerk, he has command of the front desk during the night, a position in which he works closely with the Night Manager. His duties are more

extensive than those of an ordinary room clerk; he may even look into minor troubles in upstairs rooms if the Night Manager wishes. He has no official access to keys but can get any key he desires for a short period. He has the operational potential of a room clerk plus a degree of mobility at night that would make him more useful than the latter.

Front Office Manager. This is the head man behind the front desk. He usually works a normal day and is not in the hotel at night. As a department head, he has his own grand master key and may move through the hotel at his discretion without question. Usually, however, his job keeps him tied to the front office. Besides having somewhat better access in the hotel than his subordinates, he attends the top management's monthly or weekly meetings where the hotel's activities are reviewed and discussed.

Hotel Services

Bellman. Although traditionally the eyes and ears of a hotel, the bellman is not ordinarily an attractive agent prospect. He spends much of his time in the lobby, leaving it only on specific errands such as carrying luggage for the guests. Any long absence would come to the attention of his fellow bellmen and his Captain or Head Bellman. He has no direct access to keys, receiving room keys only in connection with check-ins and occasionally a floor master from the Captain for delivering or getting something from a room. His pay is very small, but tips still make the job attractive. His greatest potential for operations lies in the fact that he is somehow always tuned to the grapevine and knows a vast amount about the hotel, staff, and guests. One drawback to using him is that management watches him constantly for signs of theft, graft, or pimping.

Head Bellman or Bell Captain. This is an operationally interesting position whose incumbent ordinarily has contacts for getting anything the hotel's guests may want—show tickets, plane reservations, special restaurant tables, rented cars, guides, women. These activities of his are usually known to the management; he operates with their blessing. Thus he has both extensive connections on the outside and a good deal of authority within the hotel, particularly at lower levels. He receives many kinds of favors and kickbacks and makes in all good money. Moreover, he keeps a close eye on the activities of the service staff, bellmen, elevator operators, and doormen, using an iron hand to prevent their engaging in any of *his* sidelines with the guests. He does not ordinarily have access to a grand master

key but has the next best thing; copies of the floor masters are kept at his station for bell service to all guest rooms. Although he himself seldom has reason to leave the lobby or go to a guest's room, his authority over the other bellmen might make him an ideal primary agent. With the right operational flair, he could get his subordinates to carry out intelligence tasks without difficulty, for he alone controls their activities.

Room Service. Room service personnel do not have the high potential as recruits they might seem to at first glance. These waiters are under the strict control of the kitchen; a special Room Service Manager, the Chief Steward, or a *sous-chef* always keeps an eye on their activities, especially the amount of time they spend away from the kitchen. None of the waiters has access to keys, and all are watched closely by hotel security for signs of thieving. Their only real operational potential lies in being tuned to the hotel grapevine and being able to enter guests' rooms upon routine request.

Housekeeping Department

Maid. Like the room service waiters, hotel maids would seem promising as agents; they spend most of every day inside guests' rooms. There are several cracks, however, in this initial picture. In any hotel the maid is one of the most carefully watched employees because of her unusually good opportunities to engage in petty theft, spotting for real burglary, and prostitution. She rarely controls which floor she will work on any given day, being assigned where she is most needed. She usually has a floor master for the area, as many as 15 to 18 rooms on one or two floors. The Floor Housekeepers are responsible for keeping each maid under close supervision while she works and for checking her work carefully. A maid is likely to be not overly intelligent and is relatively expendable; she can be fired without much ceremony if her immediate superiors are at all dissatisfied with her work. In summary, both her low status on the staff and the closeness with which she is watched limit her utility.

Floor Housekeeper. This is a senior maid who controls several floors during the day, overseeing the ordinary maids there. She makes out various daily reports for the housekeeping and front offices, recording rooms occupied, the number of people in each room, and other data. She is a cut or two above her maids in natural ability and is usually experienced in the hotel as well. Unlike the maids, she always supervises the same floor. Her access to keys is on a par with other

maids'—floor masters for her area. Her salary is rather low. She has an operational potential similar to that of a Bell Captain in controlling the activities of several maids. But she has more mobility herself and can enter guests' rooms on her floors with comparative ease. Within the limits of her floor assignment, her access is surpassed only by the Head Housekeeper's.

Night Maid, Night Floor Housekeeper. These perform the same general duties as their daytime counterparts, but there are usually fewer of them. This means that they will ordinarily have larger areas of access and be freer from direct supervision.

Head Housekeeper. This seems to be one of the best positions in the hotel for operational exploitation. The position is always filled by a woman, usually one between 30 and 50. Often she will have got her experience in other hotels, and she may even be entirely foreign to the country, having been brought in especially to fill this job, considered quite an important one by hotel management. Thus she may belong to the small segment of the staff which is professional, not just recruited from local labor sources. She may be widowed, divorced, or single; she usually lives in the hotel. She is probably more a woman of the world than other women on the staff and more susceptible to approach and cultivation than a maid.

As a department head, the Head Housekeeper has her own grand master key. She is very knowledgeable of hotel activities and planning. Above all, she has unlimited access to the guest floors and need never explain her doings there, for she must keep constant check on the Floor Housekeepers' and maids' performance. Anything the maids or Floor Housekeepers report concerning the guests comes to her before anyone else, and at her discretion she may deal with it herself or pass it to the Assistant Manager. Another noteworthy fact is that she controls all room furnishings, lamps, and appliances, which are replaced by her department as necessary. Her position is of such importance in the hotel and her cooperation with Security so close in controlling the maids that she herself is almost immune from security observation. Her 100% access to the guest rooms is, however, pretty much limited to daytime; she rarely works at night.

Management

Assistant Managers. This position is somewhat ambiguous, ranging from a glorified floorwalker's in some cases to one ranking above the Front Office Manager in others; it all depends on the Manager's

desires. But even when he has no power to make any real decisions, the Assistant Manager remains one of the more attractive operational targets. During the day he will always be in nominal control of the security officers on duty and will be the man to whom the Head Housekeeper reports any problems that need investigation upstairs. In addition, he usually makes at least one room inspection daily to check on the Housekeeping Department. His access to keys is not as good as that of a department head, in that the on-duty grand master which he uses is passed to his relief, who must see and sign for it. But during his time on duty each Assistant Manager has complete control of the key. His position in the top echelon of management—even though at the bottom of it—also gives him quite a bit of freedom from direct supervision. His superior may be either the Executive Assistant Manager or the Front Office Manager, depending on the hotel's policy, but he has more or less a free hand in dealing with daily problems, calling in his superiors only if something quite serious occurs. His pay is usually the lowest at management level. Although he is normally on duty in the front lobby, he is free to visit and investigate the upper floors as the situation requires.

Night Manager. During the day there are usually three or four Assistant Managers who follow one another on duty somewhat like changes of a military guard. But at 11 p.m. the Night Manager takes on the combined duties of Manager, Assistant Manager, Front Office Manager, and Chief Security Officer until 8 a.m. He thus rolls more functions into one person than any of the other managerial officers. Working at hours when most of the remaining staff are off, he has complete control while on duty. It is evident that he is one of the most promising recruitment targets in any hotel. His access with the rotating grand master key is limited only by the fact that he must not be away from the lobby too long at a time. Any serious action the hotel takes against a guest at night is initiated and controlled by the Night Manager. The security officers on duty, like the rest of the night staff, answer to him for all their activities. He is usually a professional of some years' experience in the hotel business. He almost invariably likes this position for the freedom of action and decision it gives, and the challenge of handling the many varied problems that develop in a big hotel at night.

Executive Assistant Manager. Usually the number two man in the hotel, this is another attractive target. He has unquestioned access to all parts of the hotel with his own grand master key, and

he takes part in all hotel planning. There is operational potential in the fact that he—along with only the Manager and the Front Office Manager—can arrange special accommodations for VIP's, particular friends of the hotel, and other special guests. His operational limitations lie in his very authority, for he is almost too senior to appear upstairs on the guest floors and is tied almost constantly to executive tasks at his desk.

Manager. Little need be said about the Manager, who, being the top man, is clearly of great interest as a possible recruit. His power is akin to that of a ship captain, almost absolute. He is personally responsible to the owners for the profitable and orderly functioning of the hotel and within that framework is more or less at liberty to run it as he sees fit. Like anyone in such a top management position, however, he is somewhat removed from the hotel's day-to-day routines, and much of his activity will lie outside the hotel proper.